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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000551

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SUBJECT: MARINE CORPS COMMANDANT GENERAL HAGEE WITH TGS AND
TLFC ON IRAQ AND BILATERAL COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) BEGIN SUMMARY: US Marine Corps Commandant General Michael Hagee outlined for Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Isik Kosaner and Turkish Land Forces Commander (TLFC) General Yasar Buyukanit in separate meetings on Feb. 2 the Iraqi Coalition's progress to stand up Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) that are increasingly able to assume primary responsibility for keeping order. In response to concerns over the absence of ISF forces south of the Turkish border to prevent terrorists from crossing over, Hagee emphasized that standing up an ethnically-mixed ISF and border police force, and ensuring a sovereign, unified Iraq are the best ways to beat the terrorists. Hagee underscored the continued importance of intelligence-sharing and asked for Turkey's influence with Syria to control its border with Iraq. He invited Turkey to send officers to observe US training programs -- particularly those modeled on the Iraq experience, with a focus on IEDs, and offered joint exercises at the platoon-level. Characterizing his recent visit to the US as excellent, GEN Buyukanit looked forward to a reciprocal visit by GEN Schoomaker this year. GEN Kosaner noted TGS concerns with Iran's nuclear plans and emphasized that any solution must have the support of the Iranian people. END SUMMARY.

US COMMITTED TO SUCCESS IN IRAQ

2. (S) GEN Buyukanit opened by commenting that a Jan. 2006 report by the (US) National Security Advisory Group entitled "The U.S. Military - Under Strain And At Risk" portrayed the state of the US military as poor. Gen Hagee responded that US military morale is high and both the US Army and US Marine Corps are busy, battle-hardened and positive about the progress they are making in Iraq. Noting the mood in Al Anbar province, Hagee said ISF forces had taken over security control of several sections of Fallujah, even drafting, executing and critiquing their own security operation. Buyukanit responded that there was not a single ISF soldier just south of Turkey's border with Iraq and that there are only Kurdish forces in northern Iraq. Hagee stated that Iraqis want to control their entire border. He noted Coalition efforts to ensure the ISF does not represent any particular ethnic group and recounted his conversations with several ISF brigade commanders who were dedicated to the support of Iraq and not their particular ethnic group. Hagee emphasized to both Kosaner and Buyukanit the importance of seeing the political process through. President Bush is committed to a stable Iraq and to keeping US forces there to train the ISF and put the military under a democratically-elected civilian government. There is not timeline for a US withdrawal, which will be dependent on the Iraqis' timing, he said.

3. (S) PKK: Kosaner and Buyukanit separately complained that the PKK moves into and out of Turkey from camps just on the Iraqi side of the shared border and noted the difficulty of controlling the mountainous border. Hagee told Kosaner that in Iraq intelligence had proved to be more important than kinetic action by helping to target the right people. He emphasized the continued importance of our intelligence-sharing program. Calling the PKK a threat to the Iraqi government as well as Turkey, Kosaner agreed that bilateral intelligence-sharing was very good but said the exchange of information was not enough to solve the problem.

4. (S) Syria: At TGS and TLFC, Hagee called Iraq's border with Syria the greatest security problem. The Coalition is working with the Iraqi border police to establish border posts and to help them patrol the borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Syria's help is needed, however, to stop the flow of fighters over the border. Hagee asked Kosaner for Turkey's intervention with Syria to control its border.

INCREASED EXCHANGES KEY TO STRONG MIL-MIL RELATIONS

5. (SBU) Reiterating an offer made during his 2003 visit to Turkey, Gen Hagee extended to both Kosaner and to Buyukanit an invitation for Turkish troops to observe and/or

participate in training in the US at Camp Le Jeune or Twenty-Nine Palms. He highlighted a 30-day training program that incorporates lessons learned from Iraq, with an emphasis on improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and noted that Turkish participation would be useful for US troops, who could gain from Turkey's understanding of the Arab culture, attitudes and village life. Kosaner acknowledged the value of training exchanges, including his own US training in 1971 during the Vietnam War. He suggested that the details of such an exchange be worked out at the action officer level.

¶6. (SBU) In addition to training, Hagee offered to do joint exercises at the platoon level. Saying that it would be difficult to train at the brigade or company level at this time, Hagee said that smaller exercises would be possible, either in Turkey or the US. Kosaner raised concerns about training along coastal areas given Turkey's extensive tourism, to which Hagee responded that extensive Marine activity in Iraq and Afghanistan made land-based training equally important and welcomed the possibility of training inside Turkey. Kosaner agreed this is an worth exploring.

DEFENSE INDUSTRY COOPERATION DISMAL

¶7. (SBU) Turning to another historic area of cooperation, Hagee said the defense industry cooperation relationship needed work. He emphasized to both Kosaner and Buyukanit the importance of our two militaries' being able to fight together and to use each other's platforms, and raised the specter of a Turkish military with technology that can talk to its Allies. Kosaner agreed on the importance of interoperability.

FEARS OF A NUCLEAR IRAN

¶8. (S) Regional security issues are a concern for Turkey, Kosaner said, listing the Hamas election win and Iran's nuclear plans in specific. He expressed his hope that the Iranian nuclear stand-off could be solved peacefully, "as you did in North Korea, without any activity." Kosaner continued that "success" is the ultimate objective but it must be "lasting, under control, and accepted by all people," and not in a way that will lead to later problems or new clashes. He warned against disturbing the "delicate balance" in the region. Hagee agreed on the importance of diplomacy to resolve the issue, and underscored the need for international participation in the solution.

REBUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

¶9. (SBU) Both Kosaner and Buyukanit emphasized the strength of the bilateral mil-mil relationship -- and to say that they could not speak for the civilian government. Kosaner welcomed the series of high-level USG visitors and said that it was his job and theirs to keep our bilateral relationship strong. He recounted Turkey's extensive support for democratic efforts in Afghanistan, including, most recently, Turkey's decision to host a PRT in Wardak, and looked forward to future cooperative efforts to build peace around the world. Hagee noted that the planned March visit of CJCS Gen Pace indicated the importance of the bilateral relationship to the US. Buyukanit opined that it was easy to establish friendships at a high level but important to reach the civilian population. Recognizing the possibility of residual ill will on the part of both US and Turkish citizens, Buyukanit urged public statements by high-level USG officials in support of the relationship. He expressed hope that CJCS Pace would make public statements in Turkey.

PARTICIPANTS

¶10. Turkey:

General Yasar Buyukanit, Commander, Turkish Land Forces
General Ergin Saygun, Chief of Staff, Turkish Land Forces
Major General Adem Huduti, J-4 Chief of Logistics, Turkish Land Forces
Major General Nazim Altintas, J-5 Chief of Plans and Policy, Turkish Land Forces

US:

General Michael Hagee, Commandant, US Marine Corps
Lieutenant General Emerson Gardner, Deputy Commander
Sergeant Major John Estrada, US Marine Corps
Major Frank Latt, Aide de Camp to General Hagee

¶11. General Hagee did not have an opportunity to clear this

cable.
WILSON